

Lowering the Barriers to Entry into LIS Master Programs

The EINFOSE Project

Thomas Mandl¹, Tatjana Aparac Jelušić²

University of Hildesheim, Germany

mandl@uni-hildesheim.de

University of Osijek, Croatia

taparacjelusic@ffos.hr

Abstract

In most universities in Europe, the barriers to enter into a LIS master degree after earning a degree in another subject are typically high. The same is true for the international mobility of students enrolled in BA or MA LIS programs in Europe. The EINFOSE project (Information Science Education: Encouraging mobility and learning outcomes harmonization) aims at lowering this barriers by offering summer schools on core topics of information science and by providing open educational resources (OER) on these topics in the long term.

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1 Barriers

The European LIS programs are highly diverse and offer different approaches to dealing with complex digital information systems. Although they all prepare their students for handling information processes, the contents and

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structures of courses can be very heterogeneous despite some efforts for harmonization (Kajberg & Lørring, 2005; Johnson, 2013).

This leads to very different entry requirements for master programs. Students from other disciplines who wish to acquire a master degree in LIS based on the background of their first degree usually cannot easily enter a master program. There are several different approaches to handle such cases in Europe, e.g. the requirement to take BA courses before registering for the master or special courses to acquire the core competencies.

2 EINFOSE

The EINFOSE project aims at lowering this barrier and providing best practices for students from LIS and other BA programs. EINFOSE is a partnership of 8 universities funded under the Erasmus+ scheme. The partners are: University of Osijek, Croatia, Högskolan i Borås, Sweden, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria, Univerza v Ljubljani, Slovenia, Università di Pisa, Italy, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Turkey and Stiftung Universität Hildesheim, Germany (<http://sokrat.ffos.hr/einfose>). EINFOSE runs until 2018.

Within EINFOSE, OER for core areas in LIS will be developed. They are intended to support students to close their knowledge gaps and to prepare better for MA programs. OER will be developed for the four following areas from the heterogeneous perspectives (in the languages of most partners): ‘Advances in Information Science’, ‘Research Methodology in Information Science’, ‘Principles of Information Seeking’ and ‘Retrieval and Evaluation of Information Services’.

Colleagues, who have good didactic approaches for teaching some specific topic, are invited to participate. Thus, the project promotes the exchange of good didactic practice. The new OERs will be tested and optimized at two Summer Schools. The first one takes place in August 2017 in Hildesheim. The Summer School covers the OER content and online communication between students and teachers including supervision of students’ assignments afterwards. The OER can also be used for further self-study. The creation of OERs should also lead to discussions about teaching and learning outcomes. This should also lead to a substantial reduction of barriers within Europe.

Based on the experiences, the project will assemble policy recommendations for universities and other stakeholders like accreditation agencies. These will be presented and discussed at an international conference organized by the EINFOSE team in September 2018 in Pisa.

References

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